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EDITORS' TABLE.

EDITORS: A. S. PACKARD, JR., AND E. D. COPE.

— Although the attempt is sometimes made in some quarters to look down upon the work of biologists and geologists, and to attempt to sever, in an artificial way, the pursuit of philosophy from that of pure science, we have always insisted that every thinking observer of nature in any department of science, is, in his way, a philosopher, and not a mere hod-carrier to the philosophic workman. Every monograph of a group of plants or animals, every life-history of an organized being, every detailed account of a fossiliferous bed is a brick, or at least straw for making bricks, for use by the generalizer in science, physical as well as natural. Physicists were formerly and very truly styled natural philosophers, but the term in these days is quite as applicable to the philosophic biologist in his quest for the origin of life-forms and his inquiries into the nature and origin of life itself.

The vivifying effects of the study of facts and of experimentation, as well as the debt owed by human culture to the inductive method, have been insisted on by M. E. Chevreul in an essay recently read before the French Academy. The author claimed that the experimental inductive method, as followed by Newton and his successors, is unquestionably the cause of the progress of the physico-chemical sciences, while the absolute *a priori* method, as conceived by Leibnitz, barred the way to all further progress. While Newton sought the proximate cause in order gradually to ascend to a possible first cause, Leibnitz started from the first cause, which for him was everything. "The study of the material world accessible to the senses, led, according to the German philosopher, to nothing real, while the spiritual world, without parts or dimensions, as represented by monads, numerical unities endowed from their creation with motion, was the object of pure knowledge, that is, of God himself."

The scientific mind is still in training; it is still in leading strings, and it will be long before it can let go of them and soar by *a priori* methods to reach ultimate truths. This is a healthy condition, and a genuine agnosticism in so far as regards scientific *a priori* deductions or guesses is at present, at least, an encouraging symptom of modern science.